

A Guide to the Birds of Yushu Prefecture's High Altitude Wetlands Qinghai, China



John D. Farrington



WWF China – Xining Field Office 2012

A Guide to the Birds of Yushu Prefecture's High Altitude Wetlands

Cover Photograph:

Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*)

Photo by John D. Farrington

Text Copyright © 2012 by John D. Farrington

Photos Copyright © 2012 by the respective photographers

All Rights Reserved ®

Citation:

Farrington, J.D. 2012. A Guide to the Birds of Yushu Prefecture's High Altitude Wetlands, Qinghai, China. Xining, Qinghai: WWF China, Xining Field Office.

Introduction

Yushu Prefecture covers over half of China's vast Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve, the source region of three of Asia's most important rivers, the Yellow, Yangtze, and Mekong. Elevations in Yushu Prefecture range from a low of about 3520 m, where the Mekong flows out of Qinghai Province, to a high of 6860 m atop Buka Daban Peak, on the boundary between Qinghai and Xinjiang. These high elevations have left Yushu Prefecture with large areas of permafrost and glacier cover that have contributed to the formation of extensive wetlands. The main types of wetlands found in Yushu Prefecture include small lakes; riparian corridors; marshes; shallow, permafrost-controlled ponds; and wet meadows (Figures 1-5). These wetlands support a wide variety of birds ranging from waterfowl to large raptors, including birds falling into the following categories based on their annual movements: 1) year-round residents, 2) summer breeders, 3) spring and/or autumn passage migrants, and 4) altitudinal migrants.

Perhaps the most remarkable wetland for bird watching in Yushu Prefecture is the Longbao National Nature Reserve, located 50 km northwest of the prefecture capital, Jiegu. Situated at an elevation of 4200 m in Yushu County, the 14 km long Longbao Wetland is believed to have the highest density of breeding black-necked cranes anywhere in the species' range, as well as large numbers of other waterfowl species that are present in summer. Another Yushu wetland with a significant summer crane population is the roughly 150 km long Dam Chu Wetland in Zaduo County, although populations of birds in this wetland are much more widely dispersed than at Longbao. Other important wetlands in Yushu include the large lakes of the Hoh Xil (Chinese: *Keke Xili*) region and the extensive wetlands of the Leima Chu River basin. The best time for watching wetland birds in Yushu Prefecture is from about mid-April to mid-July, although migratory waterbirds are present in significant numbers from early March to mid-November.

This guide has been compiled in large part based on recorded bird sightings at the Longbao Wetland from the 1980s through 2012. The overview for each species presented includes a typical length for adult members of the species (measured along its back from the tip of the tail to the tip of the bill), a brief description of its appearance and identifying field marks, a summary of the species geographic range, its habits with respect to habitat and diet, and its general status in the vicinity of Yushu Prefecture and elsewhere in China. Finally, the IUCN Red List Category for each species is given. Of the 68 species described here, 62 were classified by the IUCN as "LC" - Least Concern, 3 were classified as "NT" - Near Threatened, and 3 were classified as "VU" - Vulnerable (see the Appendix for an explanation of these categories). It is hoped that this brief guide will be both informative and increase the reader's appreciation for the birdlife that inhabits Yushu Prefecture's fragile high altitude wetlands.



Figure 1. Nianjicuo Lake, Yushu County, Qinghai (Photo by John D. Farrington).



Figure 2. Nieqia River, Zhidui County, Qinghai (Photo by Xie Gang).



Figure 3. Longbao Marsh, Yushu County, Qinghai (Photo by John D. Farrington).



Figure 4. Permafrost-controlled wetlands, Dam Chu River Source Region, Zaduo County, Qinghai (Photo by John D. Farrington).



Figure 5. Wet meadows, Longbao Wetland, Yushu County, Qinghai (Photo by John D. Farrington).



Photo by John D. Farrington

1. Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus*

Length: 70-76 cm

Description: Smallish goose with grey body; white head with two transverse black bands across the back; neck black on back, grey in front with thin, lengthwise white stripes on either side. In flight, wings have a black trailing edge. Bill: yellowish orange with black tip. Legs: orange.

Range: Summer – central and northern Tibetan Plateau, western Xinjiang, Altai and Tuva regions of Russia, northern Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Winter – Yarlung Tsangpo Basin in southern Tibet, central China, Indian Subcontinent, and Burma.

Habits: Summers on high altitude lakes in open country surrounded by grasslands and steppes and overwinters in agricultural fields and pastures near rivers, ponds, reservoirs and wetlands. In summer grazes on fresh grass shoots but also dabbles for aquatic vegetation in shallow open water. In winter feeds on grass seeds and wheat, barley, and rice found in grain stubble fields. Occasionally feeds on insects, crustaceans, and other invertebrates.

Status: Occurs in small numbers on high altitude wetlands throughout the grasslands of Yushu Prefecture in summer. Large numbers winter in the Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of southern Tibet. At Longbao, present from early March to mid-November where it is the most abundant summer visitor, with peak counts in April and May typically ranging from 7000-8000.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Zhang Yifei, WWF China

2. Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*

Length: 61-67 cm

Description: Very large duck with a dull orange body and buff head. Summer males have a thin black neck ring. In flight wings are white with a trailing black edge. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer – Tibetan Plateau, northwest and northeast China, Black Sea Region of Europe, southwest Russia, southern Siberia, Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, southern China, Indian Subcontinent, northern parts of southeast Asia, and southeastern Europe.

Habits: Summers on the edges of inland lakes and rivers in open country such as steppes, high plateaus, and mountains. Overwinters on open water areas of rivers, flooded grasslands, marshes, lakes and reservoirs in the vicinity of agricultural lands and pastures at lower altitudes. Feeds on aquatic vegetation, insects, small crustaceans, small fish, mollusks, frogs, and amphibians by dabbling in shallow open water. Also feeds on green vegetation shoots, grass seeds, barley, wheat and other grain in stubble fields and pastures.

Status: Small numbers occur on high altitude wetlands throughout the grasslands of Yushu Prefecture in summer. Large numbers winter in the Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of southern Tibet. At Longbao, the second most abundant summer visitor where peak counts in April and May are typically about 1500.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Mdf, Wikimedia Commons

3. Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Length: 40-50 cm

Description: Medium-sized duck. Males grey with brownish back, lighter brownish head and neck, whitish belly, and black rear end. In flight trailing edge of inner wing has a conspicuous white patch. Female are brownish with lighter head and neck, bill is dark down the middle with dull orange sides. Bill: greyish black. Legs: yellowish orange.

Range: Summer – northeast China, northwest Xinjiang, western Russia, southern Siberia, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, eastern and western Europe, Canada, and northern United States. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, south China, north Africa, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, South Korea, southern Japan, southern United States, and Mexico.

Habits: Favors lakes and marshes with slow flowing water and abundant emergent vegetation. In winter can be found in estuaries and deltas. Feeds by dabbling in shallow water for aquatic vegetation but also feeds on grasses, seeds, insects, amphibians, small fish, worms, and mollusks.

Status: Common winter visitor in southern Tibet. At Longbao, a rare passage migrant although regularly seen on lakes and rivers in northeast Qinghai while on passage in spring.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

4. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*

Length: 50-60 cm

Description: Large duck. Male has a dark green head, white neck ring, dark brown breast, grey body, and black rear end. Female brown with dark eye stripe. In flight conspicuous blue trailing edge of inner wing. Bill: yellow (male), dull orange (female). Legs: Orange.

Range: Summer – interior of the Tibetan Plateau, northwest Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, northeast China, eastern Europe, subarctic Russia from Europe to the Kamchatka Peninsula, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, Canada, and Alaska. Resident – United States, western Europe, north Africa, and Japan. Winter – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, central and southern China, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, Korean Peninsula, northeast Africa, southern United States, and northern Mexico.

Habits: Found in shallow areas of ponds, lakes, rivers, estuaries, and wetlands with abundant aquatic vegetation. Feeds by dabbling in shallow water for aquatic vegetation, roots, tubers, grass, seeds, insects, insect larva, worms, crustaceans, and small mollusks.

Status: Although the most common duck throughout the northern hemisphere, at Longbao, only occurs in small numbers (about 10-35), primarily on passage during spring and autumn migration, with a few birds appearing to summer at Longbao. Can be seen year round on the wetlands and rivers of northeast Qinghai. Common in winter in Southern Tibet.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Laitche, Wikimedia Commons

5. Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Length: 42-49 cm

Description: Medium sized duck. Male has a reddish chestnut head and neck with a black breast, light grey body, and a black rear end. Female: Brown head, neck and breast with lighter greyish brown body. Bill: black base and tip with a grey transverse band in the middle. Legs: grey.

Range: Summer – western Russia, Soviet Central Asia, central Siberia, and Mongolia. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, southern China, Indian Subcontinent, Burma, northern Southeast Asia, and north Africa.

Habits: Found on open water wetlands, often with abundant emergent vegetation such as reed beds or sedge marshes. Feeds by diving, dabbling, and grazing for aquatic plants, aquatic insects and their larvae, mollusks, crustaceans, worms, small fish, amphibians such as frogs and their tadpoles, grass, and seeds.

Status: Frequently sighted on passage on the eastern Tibetan Plateau and in northern China during spring and autumn migration. At Longbao, sighted in small numbers (<10) during April and early May.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Dick Daniels, <http://carolinabirds.org/>. Wikimedia Commons

6. Ferruginous Pochard *Aythya nyroca*

Length: 38-42 cm

Description: Small duck with dark chestnut colored head and body, darker brownish back, and white patch under tail. Eye: white (male) or brown (female). Bill: grey. Legs: grey.

Range: Summer – central Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, southern regions of Western Europe, southwest Russia, and Soviet Central Asia. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, Yangtze River valley, southern Europe, north Africa, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, and Burma.

Habits: Prefers wetlands with abundant emergent and submerged aquatic vegetation. Feeds by diving and dabbling for seeds, roots, and shoots of aquatic plants as well as worms, mollusks such as snails, crustaceans, adult and larval insects, amphibians such as frogs and tadpoles, and small fish.

Status: Relatively rare but locally common at its preferred summer breeding sites in China. At Longbao, numbers are typically greater than 50 throughout the summer but can peak at 250-400 during the spring and fall migrations. Small numbers overwinter in southern Tibet.

IUCN Red List Category: NT Near Threatened, due to degradation and destruction of well-vegetated shallow pools and other wetland habitats.



Photo by Calibas, Wikimedia Commons

7. Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Length: 42-50 cm

Description: Medium-sized duck. Male has a large, rounded, dark green head with a conspicuous white patch below the eye, white body with black back and black rear end. Female has a large, rounded, brown head and grey body that is darker on the back. In flight, both male and female have conspicuous white wing patches. Bill: black (male), dark blackish grey (female). Legs: orangish.

Range: Summer – northern Europe, western Russia, all of subarctic Siberia, Canada, and Alaska. Winter – eastern Tibetan Plateau, central China, Korean Peninsula, Japan, northern Indian Subcontinent, United States, and northern Mexico.

Habits: Prefers large lakes and rivers. Feeds primarily by diving and occasionally dabbling for aquatic invertebrates such as mollusks, worms, crustaceans, aquatic insects, insect larvae, amphibians, and small fish. Consumes some plant material, mainly in autumn, such as seeds, roots, shoots, and leaves of aquatic plants.

Status: Can be seen in fairly large numbers in winter and spring on lakes and rivers in northeastern Qinghai. At Longbao, a rare (<10) passage migrant sighted in June.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Mdf, Wikimedia Commons

8. Common Merganser *Mergus merganser*

Length: 58-72 cm

Description: Very large duck with long, slender hooked bill. Males have a dark green head with slight crest, white breast and body, and black back. Females have a chestnut head with slightly shaggier crest and grey body that is darker on the back. Bill: orange. Legs: orange.

Range: Summer – northern Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, northeast China, northwest Europe, western Russia, subarctic Siberia, Mongolia, Alaska, Canada, and northern United States. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, central and southern China, South Korea, Japan, southern parts of western Europe, Black Sea and Caspian regions, Soviet Central Asia, Indian Subcontinent, Burma, United States, and northern Mexico.

Habits: Found on open water areas of large lakes and rivers where it feeds almost exclusively by diving for small fish and to a lesser extent on mollusks, crustaceans, worms, insects, insect larvae, amphibians, small mammals, and birds.

Status: Can be found throughout the year on unfrozen rivers and lakes of the eastern Tibetan Plateau and fairly large numbers overwinter in the Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of southern Tibet. At Longbao, can be found in small numbers (<25) while on spring and autumn passage.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

9. Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Length: 28-32 cm

Description: Medium-sized bird with distinctive large, black-tipped rufous crest usually held flat; long curved bill; light rufous neck, breast, and shoulders; and black and white banded wings and tail. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer - eastern Tibetan Plateau, eastern China, western Europe, north Africa, Middle East, southwestern Russia, Soviet Central Asia, southern Siberia, Mongolia, South Korea. Resident in southern China, Indian Subcontinent, and southeast Asia. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, southern China, north Africa, Indian Subcontinent, and southeast Asia

Habits: Perches in trees in lightly wooded areas but feeds on open ground by probing soil with its long curved bill for insects, insect larvae, and worms.

Status: Occurs widely throughout most of China except for the barren western deserts. Resident on the southern Tibetan Plateau although numbers decrease in winter. At Longbao, a few birds (<5) sighted in autumn, presumably on southward passage.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Robert Pudwill, Wikimedia Commons

10. Fork-tailed Swift *Apus pacificus*

Length: 15-18 cm

Description: Blackish brown swift with typically short neck, long curved wings, white chin, deeply forked tail, and white rump. Bill: black. Legs: dark purplish.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, northern China, Mongolia, central and eastern Siberia, Korean Peninsula, Japan, and northern Indian Subcontinent. Resident in southern China and northern parts of southeast Asia. Winter – southeast Asia, New Guinea, and Australia.

Habits: Feeds while in flight by catching insects with its wide mouth over relatively open areas, generally in flocks of 10 or more birds.

Status: As elsewhere on the Tibetan Plateau, sighted at Longbao, in small numbers (<6) in late May and early June, presumably on northward passage.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

11. Little Owl *Athene noctua*

Length: 23-27 cm

Description: Small earless brown and white speckled owl, darker on back and lighter on front. Eye: bright yellow. Bill: tannish yellow. Legs: feathered white.

Range: Resident – Tibetan Plateau, western Xinjiang, northern and northeast China, North Korea, western and eastern Europe, north Africa, Middle East, southwest Russia, Soviet Central Asia, south-central Siberia, and northern Indian Subcontinent.

Habits: Stands and sits on fence posts, wires, rocks, and other prominent objects in open or relatively open country, often during the daytime. Feeds on insects, earthworms, birds, small mammals, amphibians, and snakes.

Status: Widespread in small numbers throughout the grasslands of the eastern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, lone individuals can occasionally be seen throughout much of the spring, summer, and autumn, often sitting prominently on the fences and walls of yak pens.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by www.tibetbirds.com

12. Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris*

Length: 32-34 cm

Description: Grey head; grey, green, and violet neck; grey wings with black bands on trailing edge of inner wing; pale belly; white rump. Tail has a grey base and black tip separated by a wide white band that distinguishes it from the familiar urban rock pigeon. Bill: greyish. Legs: red.

Range: Resident – Tibetan Plateau, western and northern China, Korean Peninsula, Himalaya-Pamir Region, eastern Soviet Central Asia, south-central and southeast Siberia, and Mongolia.

Habits: An altitudinal migrant in rugged mountainous country and generally seen in small flocks. Feeds on the ground on grain found in cultivated fields as well as on grass seeds and green vegetation shoots and leaves.

Status: A common resident of the Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, small flocks (<10) are commonly seen on the dry grasslands and hills around the perimeter of the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Peter Mulligan, Wikimedia Commons

13. Common Crane *Grus grus*

Length: 100-125 cm

Description: Medium-sized crane with red skin crown patch, black head and neck, and white patch behind the eyes that extends down the back of the neck. Body grey with black tipped flight feathers showing in rear. Legs: black. Bill: horn-colored to green.

Range: Summer – northeast China and northwestern Xinjiang, northern Europe, subarctic Siberia, northeastern Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Winter – southeastern Tibetan Plateau, south China, Indian Subcontinent, northern parts of southeast Asia, southern Europe, Middle East, and north Africa.

Habits: Found on shallow wetlands, marshes, lakes, agricultural fields, and grasslands. Feeds on a diet of grass roots, seeds, shoots, rhizomes, tubers, leaves of terrestrial and aquatic plants, barley, wheat, oats, rye, maize, rice, insects, insect larvae, snails, earthworms, millipedes, spiders, frogs, lizards, snakes, rodents, fish, and occasionally the eggs and young of small birds.

Status: Occasionally recorded in winter in southern Tibet while widespread in small numbers during spring migration on wetlands throughout much of the eastern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, can be seen in small numbers (<15) on passage during spring migration from April to June and again during fall migration in September.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Black-necked Crane. Photo by Zhang Yifei, WWF China

14. Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis*

Length: 140-150 cm

Description: Large crane with red skin crown patch, black head and neck, and grey body with black wing feathers showing prominently in rear. Legs: greyish black. Bill: horn-colored to greyish green.

Range: Summer – western, central and northern Tibetan Plateau of China and northwest India. Winter – Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of southern Tibet, northwest Yunnan, western Guizhou, and Bhutan. Formerly small numbers (<10) overwintered in the Himalayas of northeast India.

Habits: Found in shallow wetlands, marshes, lakes, agricultural fields, and grasslands. Feeds on a diet of terrestrial and aquatic plant material, including roots, tubers and seeds; barley, wheat, and rice from grain stubble fields; root crops such as carrots, radishes, potatoes, and turnips; insects and insect larvae; and small animals such as frogs, tadpoles, fish, snails, shrimp, and lizards.

Status: The black-necked crane is the only species of high altitude dwelling crane, the range of which is restricted to the Tibetan and Yunnan-Guizhou Plateaus and the Himalayan Region. The current total population is believed to be about 11,000, about 7,000 of which overwinter in the Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of Tibet. The three most important known summer breeding sites are the Zoige Wetlands of northern Sichuan, the Seling Co Lake region of Tibet, and the Longbao Wetland in Qinghai. At Longbao Peak counts of about 200 black-necked cranes were made in late April 2011, while a total of about 110 black-necked cranes reside at Longbao from late March to early November, including 30 breeding pairs.

IUCN Red List Category: VU Vulnerable, due to its single small population, the widespread loss of wetlands throughout its range, and changing agricultural practices on its wintering grounds that have reduced the supply of waste grain, e.g. immediate autumn plowing of fields and conversion of barley fields to greenhouse agriculture. However, due to improved protection of cranes and their eggs, the population of black-necked cranes in China appears to be increasing at present.



Photo by John D. Farrington

15. Common Coot *Fulica atra*

Length: 36-40 cm

Description: Large black rail with prominent white frontal shield on its forehead.
Bill: white. Legs: grey to greyish green.

Range: Summer – northern China, European Russia, Soviet Central Asia, southern Siberia, and Mongolia. Resident – southern Tibetan Plateau, western Europe, north Africa, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, and Japan. Winter – southern China, north Africa, southeast Asia, New Guinea, Australia, and New Zealand.

Habits: Feeds in shallow areas of wetlands with abundant vegetation by diving to collect bottom-growing water weeds and by skimming plant material from the water surface. Will also eat seeds, grain crops, mollusks, insects, insect larvae, worms, leeches, shrimp, spiders, fish, fish eggs, and frogs.

Status: A common sight on China's wetlands, including the wetlands of the southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, modest numbers (<50) occur during spring migration from mid-April to early July and again on autumn passage in late September.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Charles J. Sharp, Wikimedia Commons

16. Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

Length: 32-36 cm

Description: Medium sized rail with dark grey head, neck, and underparts; dark brown back and wings; white flank lines; white tail with black central stripe; and distinctive red frontal shield. Bill: red with yellow tip. Legs: greenish yellow.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, northeast China, southern Scandinavia to south-central Siberia, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, Russian Far East, and northern Japan. Resident – southern Tibetan Plateau; south China; western Europe; Middle East; north, central and southern Africa; Indian Subcontinent; southern Japan, and southeast Asia.

Habits: Inhabits shallow areas of wetlands, such as lakes, ponds, marshes, and canals with abundant vegetation, where it feeds by dabbling on earthworms, crustaceans, molluscs, insects and their larvae, spiders, small fish, tadpoles and occasionally birds eggs. Will also feed on algae, moss, plant shoots, seeds, grain, and berries.

Status: Frequently seen year-round in small numbers in appropriate habitat in southern Tibet, where it breeds, and also in summer on the extreme northeastern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, a lone individual was sighted in late June 2012.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Hans Hillewaert, <http://carolinabirds.org/>

17. Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

Length: 36-42 cm

Description: Large wader with long legs and bill. Body mottled grey and brown with light greyish brown head, neck, and breast and darker back. Breeding males have a rufous wash to head, neck and back. Female larger than male. In flight has thin white bands at back of wings and a tail with black end and white middle and base. Bill: pinkish red at base with black tip. Legs: blackish green.

Range: Summer – northwest Xinjiang, northeast China, western Europe to Soviet Central Asia, central Siberia, and Mongolia with patchy distribution in the Russian Far East. Winter – southern Europe; north, west, central, and east Africa; Middle East; Indian Subcontinent; southeast Asia; and Australia.

Habits: Favors shores of lakes, marshes, river banks, and tidal mudflats where it feeds on insects and insect larvae, worms, mollusks, crustaceans, spiders, fish eggs, frogs, and tadpoles. On its breeding grounds will eat beetles and grasshoppers, while on migration will eat berries, seeds, and rice.

Status: Breeds in the Xinjiang Tian Shan and eastern Inner Mongolia but can be seen on passage throughout much of China. At Longbao, groups of up to 80 have been seen on spring passage in early May.

IUCN Red List Category: NT Near Threatened, due to a rapid decline in numbers caused by changes in agricultural practices that result in loss of nesting habitat, particularly the draining of wetlands for conversion to intensive agriculture.



Photo by Andreas Trepte, www.photo-natur.de, Wikimedia Commons

18. Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

Length: 27-29 cm

Description: Medium sized wader with brownish grey head and breast and a darker, brownish grey back. In flight has a white stripe down its lower back and rump and white trailing edge of wings. Bill: reddish orange base with black tip. Legs: orangish red.

Range: Summer – Tibetan Plateau, northern China, western Europe, southern Russia from Europe to the Russian Far East, Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Winter- southern China; southern Europe; north, west, central and east Africa; Middle East; Indian Subcontinent; and southeast Asia.

Habits: Found along shallow areas of wetlands, lakes, marshes, riverbanks, salt pans, and tidal mudflats where it feeds on a diet of insects, spiders, worms, mollusks, crustaceans, small fish, and tadpoles.

Status: A fairly common wader in season throughout much of China fairly abundant on Tibetan Plateau wetlands from spring to autumn. At Longbao, present for about 6 months per year from early May to early November with numbers peaking in mid-June at just under 150. Small numbers overwinter in the Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of southern Tibet.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Hartmut Jungius, WWF-Canon

19. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Length: 13-15 cm

Description: Small, non-descript wader. Light brownish grey head, upper breast, and back with whitish belly. In flight has a white tail with dark brown band lengthwise down the middle and fine white stripes across the lower wings. Bill: black. Legs: greenish to yellowish.

Range: Summer – northern Europe and Arctic Russia from Norway to the Bering Strait. Winter – coastal southeast China, southern Europe, Middle East, north and Sub-Saharan Africa, Indian Subcontinent, and southeast Asia.

Habits: Found in marshes, riverbanks, lakes, wet fields, tidal mudflats, and creeks where it feeds on a diet of insects, insect larvae, worms, crustaceans, small mollusks, and occasionally plant matter.

Status: Can regularly be seen on passage on the Tibetan Plateau, in western Xinjiang, and throughout most of eastern China. At Longbao, recorded in small numbers (<30) on spring passage from mid-April to mid-June and has been noted on return passage in late summer and early fall elsewhere on the eastern Tibetan Plateau.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

20. Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

Length: 40-42 cm

Description: Large wader with grey neck, back, tail and upper wings and distinctive long, down curved bill. Face and crown black, underside of wings and belly white with black breast band. In flight has prominent white patches on upper side of wings. Bill: red. Legs: greyish red.

Range: Resident – Tibetan Plateau, western Xinjiang, central and northern China, southern Himalaya, northern Afghanistan, and southwestern Soviet Central Asia. Some seasonal winter movements to lower elevations along the southern Himalaya and Karakorum Ranges.

Habits: Found on vegetation-free, stony banks and bars of swiftly flowing mountain rivers, generally from 1000 to 4500 m, although sometimes lower in winter, where it feeds on insects and their larvae and occasionally small fish.

Status: Seen regularly in small numbers (<5) in southern Tibet and the Himalaya. In Yushu Prefecture, a pair was sighted in the Batang (Zha Qu) River about 8 km downstream of central Jiegu in July 2012. Not recorded at Longbao.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Dürzan Cirano, Wikimedia Commons

21. Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

Length: 15-17 cm

Description: Small wader with brownish cap, eye patch, and back with whitish neck ring, throat, forehead, eyebrow, breast and belly. Breeding adult has black breast band, eye mask, forehead band, and bright yellow eye ring. Bill: blackish grey. Legs: yellow.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, western Xinjiang, most of central and eastern China, western Europe, Middle East, all of subarctic Russia and Siberia, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, and north Africa. Resident – Indian Subcontinent, Indochina, Philippines, and New Guinea. Winter – coastal southeast China, Sub-Saharan Africa, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Habits: Found on sandy, gravelly, and muddy margins of lakes, rivers, marshes, wetlands, wet grasslands, paddy fields, and tidal mudflats. Feeds on insects and insect larvae, spiders, small crustaceans, worms, mussels, snails, and occasionally plant matter such as grass seeds.

Status: Although a widespread summer resident in China, at Longbao, the little-ringed plover appears to only be a passage migrant seen in small numbers (<5) in late May and early June. Also seen in small numbers in mid- to late autumn in southern Tibet.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by J.J. Harrison, Wikimedia Commons

22. Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*

Length: 18-21 cm

Description: Smallish wader with light greyish brown cap, eye patches, partial breast band and back with white forehead, throat, breast, and belly. In flight shows fine white wing bands and white edges to tail. Breeding male has a black eye mask, and full rufous neck and upper breast band with white belly. Breeding female has partial rufous breast band. Bill: black. Legs: dark grey or greenish grey.

Range: Summer – Tibetan Plateau, Tian Shan, Himalaya-Pamir Region, and patchy distribution throughout eastern Siberia from west of Lake Baikal to the Bering Strait. Winter – coastal east Africa, coastal Indian Subcontinent, southeast Asia, and coastal Australia.

Habits: Found on sandy, gravelly, and rocky shores of lakes, marshes, salt pans, and tidal mudflats in relatively barren areas with sparse vegetation. Feeds on insects, insect larvae, worms, small crabs and other crustaceans, mollusks, and worms.

Status: Seen on passage throughout coastal eastern and northeast China as well as the Korean Peninsula. At Longbao, a rare (<5) passage migrant seen from mid-May to mid-June. Occasionally sighted in small numbers in southern Tibet on return passage in late summer.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by www.tibetbirds.com

23. Pallas's Gull *Larus ichthyaetus*

Length: 63-69 cm

Description: Large gull with light grey back and wings with black wing tips. Breeding adults have a black head in summer and whitish head with dark patch near eye and dark streaking in winter. Bill yellow with black and red markings at tip. Legs: greenish yellow.

Range: Summer - northeastern Tibetan Plateau, central Inner Mongolia, Black Sea and Caspian Sea Regions, northern Soviet Central Asia, western Mongolia. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, Indian Subcontinent, northeast Africa, Middle East, northern parts of southeast Asia.

Habits: Found on sandy riverbanks, deltas, and shores of central Asian lakes, inland seas, and coastal areas. Feeds largely by scavenging dead fish but will also catch live fish, crustaceans, insects, and small mammals. Occasionally eats reptiles, other birds, and their eggs.

Status: Breeds in large numbers at Qinghai Lake, Gyaring Tso, and Ngoring Tso in Qinghai Province, while moderate numbers overwinter in the Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of southern Tibet. At Longbao, can occasionally be seen in small numbers (<5) on passage in spring and early summer and again in early autumn.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by M.V. Sheeram, Wikimedia Commons

24. Brown-headed Gull *Larus brunnicephalus*

Length: 42 cm

Description: Medium-sized gull with white neck, breast, and belly. Back and wings are light grey, with wings having broad black tips with large white spots on the tips of the upper wing. In summer, breeding adults have a dark brown face and crown with back of head remaining white. In winter, adults have white heads with a brown spot behind the eye. Easily confused with the black-headed gull but distinguished by its pale iris, heavier bill, broader white-spotted black wing tip patterns, and its slightly larger size. Eye: whitish yellow or grey. Bill: dark red with black tip in winter. Legs: dark red.

Range: Summer – northeastern Tibetan Plateau, northeastern Soviet Central Asia, and western Mongolia. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, Indian Subcontinent, and northern parts of Southeast Asia.

Habits: Found on lakes, rivers, marshes, and in coastal areas where it feeds on live fish, shrimp, rodents, worms, and insects and by scavenging dead fish.

Status: A common sight on the Tibetan Plateau with a large, well-known breeding colony at Bird Island on Qinghai Lake. At Longbao, the brown-headed gull is primarily a spring passage migrant from late March to late May with numbers peaking in April at about 50.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Hans Hillewaert, Wikimedia Commons

25. Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*

Length: 37-40 cm

Description: Medium-sized gull with white neck, breast, and belly and light grey wings and back. Has fine black borders on the trailing edges of the top of its outer wings. In summer, breeding adults have a black face and crown with back of head remaining white. In winter, adults have white heads with a black spot behind the eye. Easily confused with the black-headed gull but distinguished by its darker iris, finer bill, finer black pattern on wing tips, and slightly smaller size. Eye: brown. Bill: dark red with black tip in winter. Legs: dark red.

Range: Summer – Xinjiang Tian Shan, northeast China, northern and eastern Europe, subarctic Russia from Europe to the Kamchatka Peninsula, northern Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Winter – southeastern Tibet, southern China, lower Yellow River Basin, southern Europe, north Africa, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, and Southeast Asia.

Habits: Found on lakes, rivers, marshes, and wetlands with lush vegetation and in coastal areas with sandy or muddy beaches, including estuaries and inlets. Feeds primarily on terrestrial and aquatic insects, mollusks, crustaceans, and marine worms but will also eat scavenged fish, rodents, and grain from agricultural fields. In western Europe, scavenges food at garbage dumps.

Status: Generally much less common on the Tibetan Plateau than the brown-headed gull with which it sometimes mixes. At Longbao, small numbers (<20) may occur on spring passage in May.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Tony Hisgett, Wikimedia Commons

26. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*

Length: 34-37 cm

Description: Medium-sized tern with black crown, light grey wings and back, dark edges to wing tips, and a deeply forked tail. Breeding adults have a grey breast and belly and black cap and forehead patch extending just below the eyes. Non-breeding adults have a white forehead and a lighter breast and belly. In summer can be confused with the whiskered tern, but has a more deeply forked tail, lighter grey under parts, black tip to bill in breeding birds, and is larger in size. Bill: black in winter but with red base and black tip when breeding. Legs: dark reddish.

Range: Summer – Tibetan Plateau, central and northeast China, northern Xinjiang, western Europe, north Africa, Middle East, subarctic Russia from Europe to the Bering Sea, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, subarctic Canada from Alberta to Newfoundland, and northernmost and coastal northeastern United States. Winter – Atlantic and Pacific Coasts of Africa; Madagascar; coastal Indian Subcontinent; southeast Asia; Australia; southern United States along the Gulf of Mexico; Caribbean; Pacific Coast of southern Mexico, Central America, and northern South America; and the Atlantic Coast of Central and South America to southern Argentina.

Habits: Frequents inland lakes, rivers, and wetlands as well as estuaries, tidal creeks, and other coastal waters. Feeds primarily by hovering above water in search of prey, then suddenly plunge diving below the water surface to catch fish. Will also eat planktonic crustaceans and insects.

Status: Found throughout the world and seen on passage in coastal areas of eastern and southern China. At Longbao seen in small numbers (<10) on passage in late spring. Small numbers summer elsewhere on the Tibetan Plateau.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Milán Radisics, WWF-Canon

27. Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

Length: 23-28 cm

Description: Small tern with grey back and wings. Breeding adults have a black cap and forehead patch that extends just below the eyes with a distinct white cheek and dark grey breast and belly. Non breeding adults have a white forehead, white and black-streaked cap with white breast and belly. Distinguished in summer from the common tern by its shallower forked tail, darker grey breast, lack of a black tip to its bill, and smaller size. Bill: black in winter, dark red when breeding. Legs: dark red.

Range: Summer – patchy distribution on the eastern Tibetan Plateau; southeast, central and northeast China; western Europe; Caspian Region; western Soviet Central Asia; Mongolia; and Vladivostok region of Siberia. Resident – offshore in China's coastal areas, southern Africa, Madagascar. Winter – north, central, and east Africa; Middle East; southeast Asia; Australia; and Indian Subcontinent.

Habits: Found on inland lakes, rivers, marshes, wetlands, flooded land, tidal mudflats, and lagoons. Feeds on insects during low skimming flight over water and by taking occasional shallow plunges for fish. Will also feed on spiders, frogs, tadpoles, shrimp, and small crabs.

Status: Occurs over the eastern Tibetan Plateau in small numbers. At Longbao, appears to be slightly more numerous (<30) than the common tern from mid-May to early October. The whiskered tern has also been recorded in adjacent Shiqu County as well as in Dege, and Baiyu Counties, all in northwest Sichuan's Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern

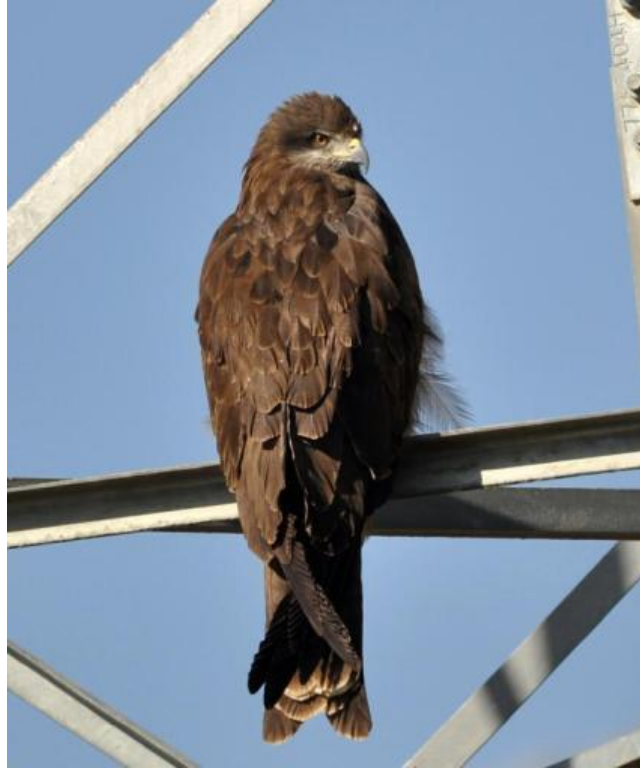


Photo by www.tibetbirds.com

28. Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Length: 55-66 cm

Description: Medium sized dark brown raptor with slightly forked triangular tail and conspicuous white to light-colored patches on outer edge of underside of wings. Bill: grey with black tip. Legs: grey.

Range: Summer – Europe, north Africa, subarctic Russia from Europe to the Sea of Okhotsk, Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Resident – all of China except for the desert regions of Xinjiang and western Tibet, Indian Subcontinent, Japan, Korean Peninsula, parts of Southeast Asia, Australia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. Winter – Middle East.

Habits: Mainly occurs around human habitation such as villages, towns, and cities although also found in mountainous areas and along the coast, at times in large numbers. Feeds primarily by scavenging refuse and carrion.

Status: Although the most common raptor on the Eurasian continent, individuals are only occasionally seen at Longbao where the dominant raptor is the upland buzzard. Fairly common on the southern Tibetan Plateau in winter.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

29. Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis*

Length: 115-125 cm

Description: Very large vulture with pale greyish brown body and head. In flight frontal area of wings appear to be almost white while wing tips and trailing edge of wings are dark brown to almost black. Short round tail is dark brown. Has a light colored neck ruff and flies with head pulled in towards body. Bill: yellowish grey. Legs: greyish pink.

Range: Summer – northern Mongolia. Resident – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, southwest Yunnan, central Inner Mongolia, Himalaya-Pamir Region, and eastern Soviet Central Asia.

Habits: Most often seen soaring singly or in large groups, at times greater than 50, around high mountain crags or at the foot of mountains in broader valleys where it feeds on carrion.

Status: On the Tibetan Plateau, seen in large groups behind monasteries and other sites where sky burial ceremonies are performed. At Longbao a common site where small parties (<10) can be frequently found feeding aggressively on dead dogs and livestock.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

30. Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*

Length: 100-110 cm

Description: Large dark brown vulture with head varying in color from dark brown to grey. Has dark brown neck ruff and short rounded tail. Flies with head pulled in towards body and in flight can easily be mistaken for any of the *Aquila* genus of eagles. Bill: grey to horn colored. Legs: grey.

Range: Resident – northern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, northern Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Gansu, southern Europe, north Africa, Caucasus, southern and eastern Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Winter – southern Tibet, Himalaya-Pamir Region, and southern Indian Subcontinent.

Habits: Found soaring over bare mountains, semi-desert, grasslands, and along river flood plains where it feeds on carrion.

Status: Although the most common vulture of the Mongolian steppes, it is somewhat rare in Yushu Prefecture and at Longbao, where individuals or pairs can occasionally be seen mixed with Himalayan Griffons feeding on carrion.

IUCN Red List Category: NT Near Threatened, due to increased mortality and decreasing food supply. The mortality of the species is increasing due to poisoning of bait intended to exterminate predators such as wolves, destruction of nests, shooting of the birds for the feather trade, and poisoning from various toxic veterinary drugs ingested while feeding on dead livestock. The food supply for the species has decreased due to new European Union regulations on the disposal of animal carcasses and the general decline in livestock populations that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, with both developments leading to a decrease in the availability of carrion. Declines in wild ungulate populations throughout Inner Asia, due largely to over-hunting, have also led to a decline in the species food supply.



Photo by Dawa Tsering, WWF China

31. Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*

Length: 110-115 cm

Description: A large vulture with pale feathered head; dark brown wings and back; and buffy-orange feathered legs, neck, breast, and belly. Has a conspicuous black “beard” growth in front of the eyes that droops below its beak. In flight, has a rather long arrow-shaped tail. Eye: yellow with red eye ring. Bill: grey. Feet: grey.

Range: Resident – Tibetan Plateau, Himalaya-Pamir Region, north Africa, east Africa, southern Europe, Middle East, southern and eastern Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Occasionally sighted in central China.

Habits: Generally found soaring around high mountain peaks and slopes. Feeds on carrion and at rubbish piles around mountain villages. Occasionally attacks live prey such as domestic and wild lambs and birds. Breaks open bones by dropping them from great heights to feed on marrow and bone fragments.

Status: Widespread in small numbers throughout Yushu Prefecture and the Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, lone individuals are occasionally seen soaring along the ridges ringing the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

32. Upland Buzzard *Buteo hemilasius*

Length: 55-70 cm

Description: Medium-size raptor with brown back and top of wings. Head brown to rather pale, breast and belly variable from dark brown to pale. In flight top of wings have conspicuous white patches at their ends. Under wing pattern consists of a dark to light brown leading part of wing, with a wide whitish middle band and black trailing edge. Bill: yellow base with black tip. Legs: feathered brown with yellow feet.

Range: Resident – Tibetan Plateau, Inner Mongolia, northern Xinjiang, northeast China, eastern Soviet Central Asia, south-central Siberia along the Mongolian Border, and Mongolia. Winter – southern Tibet, central China, southeastern Soviet Central Asia, Himalaya Region, and Korean Peninsula.

Habits: Inhabits open ground, such as grasslands and cultivated lands in mountains and hills, and is a rather common sight on the steppes of the Tibetan Plateau and Mongolia. Primarily feeds on small mammals, such as pikas and voles, as well as on small ground-dwelling birds.

Status: The most common raptor of Yushu Prefecture and Longbao, 10-20 individuals can be found in the Longbao basin on any given day in summer, where their primary prey is the black-lipped pika. Occasionally fairly large groups (<20) gather at Longbao in fall.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

33. Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*

Length: 72-84 cm

Description: Large eagle with dark brown body and wings, whitish buffy head and neck, and broad white band across the middle of the tail. Bill: grey. Legs: grey to yellowish white.

Range: Summer – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, northern and western Xinjiang, northern China, Mongolia, southern Siberia, and Soviet Central Asia.
Resident – northern Indian Subcontinent, Iran, Afghanistan, Burma.

Habits: Lives along large inland rivers and lakes as well as tidal creeks and mangrove swamps in coastal areas. Perches on fence posts, in trees, and on sandbanks next to water where it feeds by snatching fish and occasionally catching water birds, snakes, and frogs. Also scavenges carrion.

Status: Very rare summer visitor to the eastern Tibetan Plateau, Yushu Prefecture and Longbao.

IUCN Red List Category: VU Vulnerable, due to habitat loss, degradation, and disturbance, including draining of wetlands for agriculture and human settlement, felling of large trees near wetlands that has reduced availability of nest and roost sites, siltation of lakes due to increased erosion from deforestation, pesticides and industrial pollution reducing breeding success, reduction of the species' prey base due to over-fishing, and direct hunting of the species.



Photo by John D. Farrington

34. Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*

Length: 65-80 cm

Description: Large dark brown eagle. Younger individuals are lighter with two pairs of alternating black and white bars on folded wings and dark brown tail. In flight, forward part of spread wing is dark brown in adults and light brown in juveniles while trailing half of wing has a faint mottled black and light colored pattern, with these two sections being separated by a prominent white band in younger individuals. Bill: yellow base with black tip. Legs: feathered brown with yellow feet.

Range: Summer – northeast Tibetan Plateau, western Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Hebei, southwest Russia, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia. Winter – Guizhou, Guangdong, Hainan, Indian Subcontinent, Middle East, Afghanistan, northern parts of southeast Asia, most of eastern Africa.

Habits: Inhabits open grasslands, fields, hills, and wooded country where it feeds on carrion, refuse from village garbage dumps, small mammals, birds, and reptiles.

Status: At Longbao and elsewhere in Yushu, individual steppe eagles are regularly sighted throughout the spring, summer, and fall, as well as in occasional small groups (<5).

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

35. Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

Length: 80-88 cm

Description: Large dark brown eagle with paler, brighter, golden brown head and nape. In flight, trailing half of wing has mottled brown and grey appearance. Juveniles have conspicuous broad white bands on tail and wings. Bill: yellow base with dark grey tip. Legs: feathered brown with yellow feet.

Range: Summer – Alaska, northern Canada. Resident – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau; western Xinjiang; southwest, central and northeast China; Europe; north Africa; Middle East; Russia from Europe to the Kamchatka Peninsula; Soviet Central Asia; Mongolia; Korean Peninsula; Japan; Himalaya-Pamir Region; and western North America. Winter – central and eastern United States.

Habits: Found in mountains with cliffs, steppes, and open country where it hunts game birds, marmots, and other small mammals.

Status: Widespread in China but occurring in small numbers. Occasionally sighted in Yushi Prefecture and at Longbao, with up to several individuals possibly occupying the craggy mountains north of the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Markus Varesvuo, WWF-Canon

36. Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

Length: 32-35 cm

Description: Small falcon with brown wings with dark ends and buffy underparts, both of which are streaked with black spotting. Males have pale grey head with white chin and a grey tail with a prominent black band at its tip. Female has brown head and brown tail with faint black bars. Bill: yellow base with grey to black tip. Legs: buff colored feathers with yellow feet.

Range: Summer – northern Xinjiang, northern Heilongjiang, northern Europe, subarctic Russia from Europe to the Sea of Okhotsk, Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Resident – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, most of lowland China, southern Europe, north Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, Himalaya-Pamir Region, coastal southwest India, and northern parts of southeast Asia bordering China. Winter – Indian Subcontinent and northern parts of southeast Asia to peninsular Malaysia.

Habits: Inhabits open country such as of mountains, grasslands, agricultural areas, semi-desert, and tundra as well as settled areas and open areas of taiga and forests in the northern part of its range. Feeds by hovering over prey before pouncing on small rodents, small birds, lizards, frogs, and insects.

Status: Individuals are regularly sighted on the grasslands of the southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau. Individuals occasionally seen at Longbao and elsewhere in Yushu Prefecture.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

37. Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*

Length: 48-55 cm

Description: Large falcon with mottled brown wings, back, and tail; pale head; whitish chin; and whitish breast and belly streaked with dark brown spots. In flight, underside of wings and tail are whitish buff with dark speckles. Bill: yellow base with grey tip. Legs: feathered buffy brown with yellow feet.

Range: Summer – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, western and northern Xinjiang, eastern Inner Mongolia, southeastern Europe, southern Russia from the black sea to east of Lake Baikal, Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Resident – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, parts of the Middle East, and Central Asia. Winter – central China; Himalaya-Pamir Region; Indian Subcontinent; Balkans; Middle East; and west, central and east Africa.

Habits: Found in open country such as mountains, grasslands, semi-desert, and desert. Feeds on pikas, rodents, and other small mammals; small birds; and lizards.

Status: The most commonly sighted falcon in Yushu Prefecture, individuals are regularly seen at Longbao in summer where the species is known to nest on cliffs in the mountains surrounding the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: VU Vulnerable, due primarily to intensive legal and illegal live capture for sale to falconers in the Middle East. Another large threat is mass poisoning of small grassland mammals, such as pikas and voles, which eliminates prey and may kill birds scavenging poisoned animals.



Photo by Zhang Yifei, WWF China

38. Great-crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*

Length: 46-51 cm

Description: Large, long-necked grebe. Non-breeding adults have a black crown with short crest, white face and front of neck, grey back of neck and back, and white underparts. Breeding adults have a black crown with elongated crest, rufous nape, rufous “mane” edged with black, and brownish rufous sides with dark greyish black back. Bill: dark reddish base with yellowish tip. Legs: dark greyish black.

Range: Summer – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, eastern Inner Mongolia, northeast China, western and northern Xinjiang, central and eastern Europe, Russia from the Baltic Sea to Lake Baikal, Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Resident – western Europe, north Africa, and east Africa. Winter – southern China, coastal western and southern Europe, Middle East, northern Indian Subcontinent, northern southeast Asia, southern Japan, southern Africa, and Australia.

Habits: Prefers open water lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and backwaters of slow-flowing rivers and will overwinter in sheltered coastal waters such as estuaries and lagoons. Feeds by diving for fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and insects. Performs an elaborate courtship ritual in spring.

Status: In summer, very common in moderate numbers (<200) at Longbao and in smaller numbers in breeding colonies on wetlands throughout Yushu Prefecture.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Leung Wai Ki, WWF Hong Kong

39. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Length: 55-65 cm

Description: Smallish white heron with prominent long feather plume emerging from back of head during breeding season. Bill: black. Legs: black with yellow feet.

Range: Summer – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, southern China, southeastern Europe, and Amu Darya and Syr Darya Rivers of Soviet Central Asia. Resident – coastal south China, southern UK, southern Spain, north Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Madagascar, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, southeast Asia, South Korea, southern Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

Habits: Found on shallow, open water wetlands in both fresh and salt water environments such as lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, swamps, marshes, flooded meadows, estuaries and tidal mudflats. Feeds on fish, crustaceans, amphibians, mollusks, aquatic and terrestrial insects, spiders, worms, reptiles, and occasionally small birds.

Status: An uncommon passage migrant and summer resident on the eastern and southern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, small numbers (<12) have been sighted in late spring and the first part of summer. Very common in southwest and southern China.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Leung Wai Ki, WWF Hong Kong

40. Great Egret *Casmerodius albus*

Length: 90-100 cm

Description: Large white heron with long, thick bill. Bill: black when breeding, yellow at other times. Legs: thighs reddish when breeding, at other times all black.

Range: Summer – northern Xinjiang, northeast China, southeastern Europe, border regions of southern Russia from Europe to the mouth of the Amur River, southern Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Very patchy distribution in the western, central, and eastern United States. Resident – South Korea, Japan, Indian Subcontinent, southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, coastal North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, southeast United States, Caribbean Region, and South America. Winter – southern Tibetan Plateau, southern China, western Europe, north Africa, Middle East, west coast of the southwestern United States, Mexico, and Central America.

Habits: Found on rivers, lakes, marshes, floodplains, wet meadows, reservoirs, ponds, estuaries, tidal mudflats, and mangrove swamps. Feeds on fish, amphibians, crustaceans, aquatic and terrestrial insects, snakes, and occasionally lizards, small birds, and mammals.

Status: At Longbao, small numbers (<5) seen on spring passage from mid-April to mid-June. Lone individuals occasionally seen wintering in the Yarlung Tsangpo Basin of southern Tibet, although rather common in southern China in winter.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by David Blank

41. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Length: 48-53 cm

Description: Small white heron with relatively short neck, rounder head, and shorter, thicker bill than other egrets. Breeding birds have an orange wash to head, neck, breast, and back. Bill: yellow. Legs: yellowish to black.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, central and southern China, South Korea, southern Europe, Amu Darya and Syr Darya River Basins, southern Canada, United States, and Mexico. Resident – coastal and border areas of southern China, southwest Europe, north Africa, Middle East, northeast and Sub-Saharan Africa, Madagascar, Japan, Indian Subcontinent, southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Caribbean, Central America, and South America.

Habits: Found on wet meadows, livestock pastures, agricultural areas, seasonally flooded steppe and savanna grasslands, river floodplains, lakes, ponds, shallow marshes, freshwater swamps, mangrove swamps, and tidal mudflats. Feeds primarily on insects such as locusts, grasshoppers, beetles, adult and larval moths and butterflies, cicadas, and dragonflies as well as on centipedes, worms, spiders, crustaceans, frogs, tadpoles, mollusks, fish, lizards, small birds, rodents and occasional plant matter.

Status: A fairly common visitor to the wetland pastures of the southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, cattle egrets in moderate numbers (up to 100) are present from early May to early November, with numbers peaking in early July.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Angus Lau, WWF Hong Kong

42. Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*

Length: 90-100 cm

Description: Large heron with white head, long thin black plumes emerging from behind the eyes, white neck speckled black on the front, grey wings, grey back and tail, and whitish grey underparts. In flight, forward wing grey, trailing half of wing black. Bill: yellowish to orangish. Legs: dull yellowish orange.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, northwest Xinjiang, eastern Inner Mongolia, central and northeast China, central and eastern Europe, Russia from Europe to Sakhalin Island, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, and South Korea. Resident – central, southwest, and south China; UK; coastal Western Europe; southern Europe; Indian Subcontinent; Japan; southeast Asia; northeast and Sub-Saharan Africa; and Madagascar. Winter – parts of southwest Europe, north Africa, and Middle East.

Habits: Inhabits shallow water areas of rivers, streams, floodplains, deltas, lakeshores, ponds, marshes, swamps, reservoirs, canals, estuaries, tidal mudflats, and mangroves with a preference for areas with trees for roosting, although also occurring on grassland wetlands. Feeds mainly on fish and eels but also on amphibians, crabs, mollusks, crustaceans, aquatic insects, snakes, rodents, small birds, and occasional plant matter.

Status: At Longbao, occasionally sighted in spring in small numbers (<5) but more abundant on passage at large lakes on the eastern Tibetan Plateau. Abundant in south China in winter.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Dieter Damschen, WWF-Canon

43. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*

Length: 90-100 cm

Description: Large black stork with greenish to purplish metallic gloss to head, neck, upper breast, and wings. Belly and vent white. In flight distinguished from the black-necked crane by its all black wings, bright red legs, and longer red bill.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, all of northern China from Xinjiang to Heilongjiang, Europe, Korean Peninsula, Middle East, subarctic Russia from Europe to the Sea of Okhotsk, eastern Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Winter – Indian Subcontinent, much of Sub-Saharan Africa, and China south of the Yangtze.

Habits: Found on marshes, rivers, flood plains, streams, wet meadows, ponds, lakes, and estuaries on grasslands and in open forests. Feeds primarily on fish but will also eat amphibians; insects; snails; crabs; and small reptiles, mammals, and birds.

Status: The species is presently believed to be in decline in the eastern part of its range, although still regularly recorded in China. At Longbao, seen in small numbers (<5) in recent years. Has also been recorded in neighboring Shiqu County and elsewhere in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan as well as at Qinghai Lake, where it is a rare passage migrant.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

44. Hume's Groundpecker *Pseudopodoces humilis*

Length: 19 cm

Description: Small ground dwelling bird with sandy brown crown, back, and wings and buffy white face, chin, breast, belly and nape patch. Tail buffy white with central brown stripe. Noticeably downward curved bill. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Resident – Tibetan Plateau, Himalaya, and Pamir Regions.

Habits: Lives on high altitude grassy plains and hills, often close to settlements, where it excavates nest holes in soft walls of gullies and cliffs. Feeds on insects and other invertebrates by pecking at grass, ground, and yak dung. Bobs up and down while standing.

Status: Very common around settlements and on the grasslands of the Longbao Basin, Yushu Prefecture, and the Tibetan Plateau in general.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by David Blank

45. Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Length: 36-41 cm

Description: Small black crow with slender curved bill. Bill: red or yellowish brown in juveniles. Legs: red.

Range: Resident – Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, central and northeast China, U.K., southern Europe, north Africa, Middle East, Caucasus, eastern Soviet Central Asia, south-central Siberia, and Mongolia.

Habits: Found in flocks on high mountains with cliffs, adjacent short grasslands, and upland cultivation. Forages by probing ground, dung, and turning over stones for insects, other small invertebrates, and berries. Often perches on roofs of homes and other buildings.

Status: A common resident throughout the Tibetan Plateau which at times gathers in large flocks, particularly around monasteries. At Longobao, resident on the mountains and homes surrounding the wetland and generally seen in small groups (<10).

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

46. Common Raven *Corvus corax*

Length: 56-68 cm

Description: Very large, all black glossy crow. Distinguished from the large-billed crow, which overlaps its range, by its larger size, shaggier throat, less domed head, and “croaking” call.

Range: Resident - Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, western Heilongjiang, Europe, north Africa, all of Russia except the extreme northern Arctic Ocean coast, Middle East, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, Himalaya-Pamir Region, Greenland, North America, and northern Central America.

Habits: Found in mountains, grasslands, semi-desert, desert, forests, river valleys, and seashore areas as well as around villages, towns, and nomadic settlements. Omnivorous but feeds primarily on carrion, rodents, and insects, and to a lesser extent on grain, berries, fruit, small animals, and food waste picked from rubbish dumps.

Status: A common resident of the Longbao Basin and the grasslands of Yushu Prefecture.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Alnus, Wikimedia Commons

47. Daurian Redstart *Phoenicurus auroreus*

Length: 15 cm

Description: Medium-sized redstart with whitish grey crown and nape, black face and throat, brownish black back and wings with conspicuous small white wing patches, and rufous orange underparts. Tail rufous with dark center. Female brown with rufous tail and conspicuous small white wing patches. Bill: black. Feet: black.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, central China, northeast China, Mongolia, southeastern Siberia from the Baikal Region to Sakhalin Island, and Korean Peninsula. Winter – southern China, eastern Himalaya Region, Japan, and northern Southeast Asia.

Habits: Summers at higher altitudes in scrub, open forests, and trees around villages and cultivation. Winters in bushes around villages and streams. Feeds by perching in bushes and low-hanging trees branches, then hopping to the ground to catch insects. Also eats berries and grass seeds.

Status: Regularly sighted in small numbers on the eastern Tibetan Plateau where there is sufficient shrubby habitat. At Longbao, rare sightings made of individuals that are presumably on passage.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by David Blank

48. Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Length: 14-16 cm

Description: Medium sized redstart with seven distinct subspecies. Subspecies *rufiventris* is widespread on the Tibetan Plateau. Males have a greyish black crown and black face, throat, upper breast, back, and wings. Lower breast, underparts, rump, and outer tail are all rufous. Females are brown with rufous edges to tail. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer – Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, north-central China, Europe, southwest Russia from Europe to the Caspian and southern Siberia along the borders of Kazakhstan and Mongolia, eastern Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, and Himalaya-Pamir Region. Resident – southern Europe. Winter – north and northeast Africa, Middle East, and Indian Subcontinent.

Habits: Perches on rocks, bushes, and other vantage points, then drops to the ground to feed on insects. Frequently shivers tail. Often seen around houses.

Status: A common bird of the Tibetan Plateau in summer, with widely scattered pairs frequently sighted at Longbao from spring to fall.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

49. White-winged Redstart *Phoenicurus erythrogaster*

Length: 16-18 cm

Description: Large redstart. Male has white crown and nape; black face, throat, and back; black wings with large white patches; and rufous breast, belly, and tail. Female is light brown with darker brown wings, lighter underparts, and rufous tail. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer – northern Baikal Region of Russia. Resident – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, Caucasus, eastern Soviet Central Asia, Altai-Sayan Region of Russia, western Mongolia, and Himalaya-Pamir Region. Winter – southwest and northeast China.

Habits: Altitudinal migrant found on alpine meadows in summer and in shrubby valley bottoms in winter. Perches on rocks, bushes, and other low perches then hops to the ground to feed on insects.

Status: Widespread resident of the eastern Tibetan plateau with individuals regularly seen on the hills around the Longbao Wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

50. Hodgson's Redstart *Phoenicurus hodgsoni*

Length: 15 cm

Description: Small redstart. Male has black face and throat; grey crown, nape and back; conspicuous white forehead line; grey wings with small, streak-like white patches; and rufous underparts and tail. Female is light brown with lighter underparts and rufous tail. Bill black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau. Winter – southwest China, southeastern Himalaya, and northern Burma.

Habits: Found in open grassy areas, shrubs, stony river beds, and stream banks. Feeds by catching insects in the air, particularly in shrubby areas, and by hopping from a perch to catch insects on the ground.

Status: Widespread but relatively uncommon on the eastern Tibetan Plateau in comparison to other species of redstart. Lone individuals occasionally seen around the Longbao Wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

51. Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

Length: 12-13 cm

Description: Small swallow with greyish brown head, back, wings and tail. Throat white, breast white with a greyish brown breast band, belly and vent white. In flight wings are all brown underneath. Bill: black. Feet: black.

Range: Summer – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, northwest Xinjiang, northeast China, Europe, north Africa, Middle East, Russia from Europe to the Kamchatka Peninsula, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, Canada, and the United States including Alaska. Resident – central China. Winter – south China, Sub-Saharan Africa, northeast India, northern parts of southeast Asia, southern Mexico, and South America north of Patagonia.

Habits: Lives along rivers, lakes, marshes, and wet meadows, particular areas with sandy shores. Generally feeds in flocks by continuously flying over water to eat flying insects. Large groups often perch together on power lines and tree branches.

Status: At Longbao and Yushu Prefecture, sighted in relatively small numbers (<25) in summer, where it breeds in sand banks. Elsewhere on the Tibetan Plateau, can occasionally be seen perched on power lines in groups of up to several hundred.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Fiona Tse, WWF Hong Kong

52. Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Length: 18-20 cm

Description: Medium sized swallow with long, deeply forked tail. Dark blue crown, nape, back and upper wings with brownish red forehead and throat. White breast, belly, and vent. Underside of wings white to light grey or buff.

Range: Summer – eastern Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, all of lowland China, Europe, north Africa, Subarctic Russia from Europe to the Kamchatka Peninsula, Middle East, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, Canada, United States, and southern Mexico. Winter – Sub-Saharan Africa, Indian Subcontinent, southeast Asia, northern Australia, Central America, and South America.

Habits: Found over open ground and water where it feeds in continuous flight by catching insects. Frequently seen in large flocks perched on power lines and in trees. Prefers to build its mud-cupped nests under the eaves of buildings.

Status: Occurs in small numbers (<25) at Longbao in mid-summer and elsewhere on the eastern and southern Tibetan Plateau.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Agustín Povedano, Wikimedia Commons

53. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo Daurica*

Length: 17-19 cm

Description: Medium sized swallow with long, deeply forked tail. Crown and back dark blue. Forehead, nape, and rump rufous. Throat, cheeks, breast and belly white with fine dark streaking. Wings dark blue above, whitish underneath. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, all of eastern China from the south to Heilongjiang, southern Europe, north Africa, southern and eastern Soviet Central Asia, southern Siberia from the Altai to Sakhalin Island, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan. Resident – Indian Subcontinent and Sub-Saharan Africa. Winter – southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa from the Sahel south to Tanzania.

Habits: As with the barn swallow, glides and circles over open ground and water, particularly rivers, where it feeds in continuous flight by catching insects. Seen in large numbers perched on power lines, in trees, and on cliffs.

Status: Common over most of China. Frequently seen in summer over river valleys in eastern Yushu Prefecture, particularly at relatively lower altitudes. Not recorded at Longbao.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by David Blank

54. Tibetan Lark *Melanocorypha maxima*

Length: 21 cm

Description: Large, thick-billed lark with slight crest, plain brown crown and eye patch, and mottled brown back, wings, and tail. Throat, breast, and belly light grey. Thin streaky black patch on either side of throat. Bill: yellowish brown darkening towards tip. Legs: dark brown.

Range: Tibetan Plateau and the Himalaya Region.

Habits: Found in hummocky, marshy grasslands around large, high-altitude lakes where it feeds on the ground on a diet of seeds and insects. In spring engages in rising flight display when it will hover high above the ground mimicking a wide variety of local birds, including *tringa* waders and choughs among others.

Status: Common in appropriate lakeside habitat on the southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, regularly sighted around the wetland in small numbers (<15).

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by www.tibetbirds.com

55. Hume's Short-toed Lark *Calandrella acutirostris*

Length: 14 cm

Description: Small lark with slight crest and mottled greyish brown head, nape, back and wings. Throat, breast, and belly are lighter greyish brown. Has two prominent black spots on either side of throat. Bill: brownish yellow. Legs: yellowish brown.

Range: Summer – Tibetan Plateau, eastern Soviet Central Asia, Afghanistan, and western Pakistan. Winter – Northern Indian Subcontinent.

Habits: Found on bare rocky mountainsides and semi-desert in summer, and on agricultural fields in winter where it feeds on the ground on insects and seeds.

Status: Somewhat common on mountain slopes in Yushu Prefecture and occasionally seen in meadows and upland areas surrounding the Longbao Wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by David Blank

56. Oriental Skylark *Alauda gulgula*

Length: 16 cm

Description: Small mottled brown lark with faint eyebrow, reddish brown eye patches, slight crest, and fine bill. Underparts light grey with upper breast streaked black. Bill: horn colored. Legs: pinkish brown.

Range: Summer – Soviet Central Asia, Afghanistan, Western Pakistan. Resident – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, central and southern China, Indian Subcontinent, and southeast Asia.

Habits: Found on short-growing or short-cropped grasslands both in steppe areas and in moister environments around wetlands as well as on agricultural fields. Feeds on the ground on insects and seeds. In spring sings melodiously in rising flight display before falling back to earth.

Status: The most common lark of the southern Tibetan Plateau, seen in small numbers (<10) at Longbao and elsewhere in Yushu Prefecture in summer.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by David Blank

57. Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Length: 16-19 cm

Description: Medium sized lark with greyish brown crown and nape, mottled greyish brown back and wings. Forehead white with a black line bordering the crown that extends into two horn-like tufts. Thick black moustachial stripe and thick black upper breast band. Throat and underparts whitish. Bill: grey. Legs: blackish.

Range: Summer – northern Europe, Arctic Russia, Alaska, Canada, and northern United States. Resident – Tibetan Plateau; Xinjiang; northern China; Himalaya-Pamir Region; southern Europe; north Africa; Middle East; southwestern European, Altai-Sayan, and Baikal regions of Russia; Soviet Central Asia; Mongolia; United States; and northern Mexico. Winter – U.K., central Europe, and coastal United States.

Habits: Found in a variety of open habitats including dry mountains, rocky mountain slopes and scree, alpine and sub-alpine steppe and meadows, deserts, sandy lakeshores and river banks, agricultural fields, and tundra. Feeds on the ground on insects and seeds.

Status: Widespread in moderate numbers on the Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao and elsewhere in Yushu Prefecture, regularly sighted in small numbers (<15).

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Laitche, Wikimedia Commons

58. Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*

Length: 14 cm

Description: Smallish sparrow with brown crown and nape small black patch around eyes that extends to chin, greyish white collar and cheeks, and prominent black spots on either side of throat. Mottled brown back and wings and buffy underparts. Bill: black. Legs: pinkish brown.

Range: Resident - all of China, Europe, Russia from Europe to the Sea of Okhotsk, Middle East, Soviet Central Asia, Mongolia, Himalaya-Pamir Region, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

Habits: Found in large flocks in lightly wooded areas, villages, and farmlands, and especially in the vicinity of houses. Feeds on seeds and grain and in some area is a crop pest, but also feeds on locusts and other insects, millipedes and spiders.

Status: The common sparrow of the Tibetan Plateau, the species can be found around homes and settlements throughout Yushu Prefecture. Resident at Longbao in moderate numbers.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

59. Tibetan Snowfinch *Montifringilla adamsi*

Length: 17 cm

Description: Medium-sized finch with plain brown head, mottled brown wings with significant stripe-like white patches when folded, lighter under parts, and white tail with blackish median stripe. Males have black throat patch when breeding. Bill: yellow with black tip but black when breeding. Legs: Black.

Range: Tibetan Plateau and Himalaya Region.

Habits: Found on high altitude grasslands, semi-desert, and agricultural lands, often near villages. In winter forms large flocks and feeds on seeds and grain. In other seasons will eat a variety of insects and other burrowing invertebrates which it catches by probing the soil with its bill.

Status: A fairly common sight on the Tibetan Plateau, particularly in winter when large flocks will gather at lower elevations. At Longbao, frequently seen in small flocks (<20) scattered around the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

60. White-rumped Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda taczanowskii*

Length: 17 cm

Description: Medium-sized, somewhat pale finch with pale brown crown, mottled brown back and wings, whitish grey face with small black patches in front of eyes, and whitish grey underparts. In flight, has a conspicuous white rump and prominent white bands the length of its wings. Bill: yellowish to horn colored, sometimes with black tip. Legs: black.

Range: Tibetan Plateau and Himalaya Region.

Habits: Found on high altitude grasslands, wetland fringe areas, gravelly plains, and deserts, often around settlements and camps. Feeds on seeds, grain, moth and beetle larvae, and ants plucked from the ground as well as on flies and other insects. Also feeds on food refuse around villages. Uses pika holes for shelter and nesting and forms large flocks in winter.

Status: Common in moderate numbers throughout most of the Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao the species is regularly sighted near homes surrounding the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

61. Rufous-necked Snowfinch *Pyrgilauda ruficollis*

Length: 15 cm

Description: Medium-sized finch with brown crown and nape separated from a white face by a rufous colored border. Has black moustachial and eye stripes, mottled brown back and wings, and light buffy underparts.

Range: Tibetan Plateau and Himalaya Region.

Habits: Found on high altitude grasslands, wetland fringe areas, gravelly plains, and deserts, often around settlements and camps. Feeds on seeds, grain, food refuse, and insects and other small invertebrates. Uses pika holes for shelter and nesting and forms large flocks in winter, frequently mixed with other snowfinch species.

Status: The most common snowfinch of Yushu Prefecture, in autumn it can form feeding flocks of several hundred around the edges of the Longbao Wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Andreas Trepte, www.photo-natur.de, Wikimedia Commons

62. White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

Length: 18-20 cm

Description: Medium-sized wagtail with white face, black crown and nape, grey back, black and white wings, black breast and throat patch and white underparts. Black facial markings vary by subspecies. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer – all of northern China, northern Europe, nearly all of Russia from Europe to the Bering Strait, Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Resident – southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, south China, western Europe, northwest Africa, Korea, and Japan. Winter – North Africa, Sahel, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, and southeast Asia.

Habits: Found in open spaces from sea level to over 4000 m, especially along the edges of streams, rivers, irrigation canals, wetlands, ponds, lakes, and paddy fields, often near settlements. Feeds on terrestrial and aquatic insects and other small invertebrates, including flies, beetles, dragonflies, small snails, spiders, worms, crustaceans, and maggots found in carcasses. Continuously wags its tail.

Status: Widespread resident of the southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau, and can be quite numerous in appropriate habitat. At Longbao, occasionally seen in small numbers (<5).

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by J.M. Garg, Wikimedia Commons

63. Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

Length: 18 cm

Description: Medium sized wagtail with unmistakable bright yellow head, breast and belly, greyish to black nape, grey back, and black and white wings and tail. Bill: black. Feet: blackish.

Range: Summer – Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, northern and southwest China, central and eastern Europe, Russia in a patchy distribution from Europe to Central Siberia, eastern Soviet Central Asia, and Mongolia. Resident – Yunnan. Winter – southern China, Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, and southeast Asia.

Habits: Found on wet meadows, grassy wetlands, willow thickets, and tundra. Feeds on a mix of insects, insect larvae, and other aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates.

Status: Widespread summer resident occurring in moderate numbers on the southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao seen in small numbers (<15), primarily during spring passage.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by Lukasz Lukasik, Wikimedia Commons

64. Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

Length: 18 cm

Description: Medium sized wagtail with brown to olive green crown, nape and back; yellow throat, breast and belly; and black and brown to olive green wings. Bill: black. Legs: black.

Range: Summer – northwest Xinjiang; northeast China; western Europe; nearly all of Russia from Europe to the Bering Strait; and coastal, western, and northern Alaska. Winter – southern China, Indian Subcontinent, southeast Asia, Africa, and parts of Australia.

Habits: Found on pastures, meadows, grassy wetlands, marsh edges, and rice paddies. Feeds on flies, beetles, and other small insects and invertebrates.

Status: Passage migrant along the eastern Tibetan Plateau that has been recorded at Longbao in small numbers (<5) in late summer.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by www.tibetbirds.com

65. Robin Accentor *Prunella rubeculoides*

Length: 16 cm

Description: Medium sized accentor with grey, head, throat, and nape; rusty orange breast band; mottled brown back and wings; and greyish white underparts with some dark streaking on the sides. Bill: black. Legs: dull reddish brown.

Range: Tibetan Plateau and Himalaya Region.

Habits: An altitudinal migrant that summers in high altitude meadows and shrublands and overwinters at lower elevations in grassy valley bottoms and shrubs around settlements. Feeds on insects, berries, and seeds.

Status: A common resident of the Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, can be seen in small numbers (<5) in summer on grassy slopes surrounding the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by David Blank

66. Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

Length: 13 cm

Description: Small brown finch that is heavily streaked black with streaked light buffy underparts. In breeding males, rump is conspicuously bright pink. Bill: yellowish to horn colored or grey. Legs: blackish.

Range: Resident - Tibetan Plateau, Xinjiang, Europe, Caucasus, Soviet Central Asia, Altai Region, Himalaya-Pamir Region, and Mongolia.

Habits: Found on semi-desert, steppe, meadows, wet meadows, open hills, and in conifer and mixed conifer-deciduous forests with clearings. Feeds on the ground, primarily on seeds but also on insects.

Status: Although a common resident on the grasslands of the Tibetan Plateau, at Longbao the species is only rarely sighted in small numbers (<5).

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by John D. Farrington

67. Brandt's Mountain Finch *Leucosticte brandti*

Length: 16-19 cm

Description: Medium sized plain, light greyish brown finch with black patch on forehead and around the eyes. Black edges to folded wings and pinkish rump. Bill: greyish black. Legs: blackish.

Range: Tibetan Plateau, northwest Xinjiang, eastern Soviet Central Asia, Altai Region, Mongolia, and Himalaya-Pamir Region.

Habits: Found in barren alpine zones of mountains, particularly on high crags and cliffs, screes, rock slide zones, crests of ridges, and wet boggy areas. Feeds primarily on seeds. Forms large flocks in winters, sometimes mixed with snowfinches.

Status: Widespread at high altitudes on the Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, sighted in the mid-1980s but probably only resident on the high ridges surrounding the wetland basin.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern



Photo by www.tibetbirds.com

68. Streaked Rosefinch *Carpodacus rubicilloides*

Length: 19 cm

Description: A large rosefinch with heavy bill. Males have a deep red face that is darker around the bill and eyes. Bright red breast spotted white with brown back and wings streaked black and a pinkish rump. Females have streaky brown head, back, and wings with buffy streaked underparts. Male distinguished from the great rosefinch by its slightly darker red color and by its different song. Bill: horn colored. Legs: greyish.

Range: Southern and eastern Tibetan Plateau and Himalaya Region.

Habits: Altitudinal migrant inhabiting high altitude semi-desert and rocky screes with sparse shrubs in summer, descending to willow and shrub thickets around villages in winter. Feeds primarily on seeds.

Status: A widespread, although not abundant, resident of the Tibetan Plateau. At Longbao, occasionally sighted in small numbers (<5) on the hillslopes surrounding the wetland.

IUCN Red List Category: LC Least Concern

Species Notably Absent at the Longbao National Nature Reserve

Notably absent in the course of field work in the Longbao National Nature Reserve were a number of migratory waterbird species that are regularly recorded in southern Tibet, far to the south of Longbao, and in the vicinity of Qinghai Lake, far to the north. Some individuals of these species almost certainly stopover at Longbao while on migration, but so far have not been sighted there. These species were:

Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>
Northern Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i>
Northern Pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>
Eurasian Widgeon	<i>Anas Penelope</i>
Common Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>
Red-crested Pochard	<i>Rhodonessa rufina</i>
Green Sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>
Kentish Plover	<i>Charadrius alexandrinus</i>

Primary References

- BirdLife International. 2001. Black-necked Crane *Grus Nigricollis*. In *Threatened Birds of Asia: The BirdLife International Red Data Book*, edited by N.J. Collar, A.V. Andreev, S. Chan, M.J. Crosby, S. Subramanya, and J.A. Tobias, pgs. 1198-1225. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
- BirdLife International. 2012. IUCN Red List for birds. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
- Bishop, M.A. and Tsamchu Drolma. 2007. Tibet Autonomous Region January 2007 Survey for Black-necked Crane, Common Crane, and Bar-Headed Goose. *China Crane News* 11(1): 23-25.
- Flint, V.E., R.L. Boehme, Y.V. Kostin, and A.A. Kuznetsov. 1984. *A Field Guide to Birds of Russia and Adjacent Territories*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gombobaatar, S. and E.M. Monks, compilers. 2011. Mongolian Red List of Birds. Ulaanbaatar: Zoological Society of London, Mongolian Ornithological Society, and National University of Mongolia.
- Gombobaatar, S. and D. Usukhjargal. 2011. *Birds of Hustai National Park*. Ulaanbaatar: Hustai National Park and the Mongolian Ornithological Society.
- Grimmet, Richard, Carol Inskipp, and Tim Inskipp. 1998. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Grimmet, Richard, Carol Inskipp, and Tim Inskipp. 2011. *Birds of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- MacKinnon, John, Karen Phillips, and Fenqi He. 2000. *A Field Guide to the Birds of China*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Peng, Zhitai, and Xiangqing Zhong. 2005. *A Guide to Identification and Conservation of Wild Birds in Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province*. Chengdu: Sichuan Publishing House of Science and Technology.
- Poole, Alan, ed. 2005. *The Birds of North America Online*. Ithaca: Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/BNA/>
Accessed 24 May 2012.
- Svensson, Lars, Killian Mullarney, and Dan Zetterstöm. 2009. *Birds of Europe*, second edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Appendix: IUCN Red List Categories

Source: <http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/info/spcredcat>

The IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria are an objective and widely accepted system for classifying species at high risk of extinction. BirdLife coordinates the assessment of the status of the world's birds using these categories and criteria and, as the official Red Listing Authority for birds for the IUCN Red List, submits this information to be included on the IUCN Red List along with that of other animals and plants. The categories, including the three globally threatened categories (Vulnerable, Endangered, and Critically Endangered) are outlined below.

LEAST CONCERN (LC) - A species is Least Concern when it has been evaluated against the criteria and does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered, Vulnerable or Near Threatened. Widespread and abundant species are included in this category.

NEAR THREATENED (NT) - A species is Near Threatened when it has been evaluated against the criteria but does not qualify for Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable now, but is close to qualifying for or is likely to qualify for a threatened category in the near future.

VULNERABLE (VU) - A species is Vulnerable when the best available evidence indicates that it faces a high risk of extinction in the wild.

ENDANGERED (EN) - A species is Endangered when the best available evidence indicates that it faces a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (CR) - A species is Critically Endangered when the best available evidence indicates that it faces an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

EXTINCT IN THE WILD (EW) - A species is Extinct in the Wild when it is known only to survive in captivity or as a naturalized population (or populations) well outside the past range. A species is presumed Extinct in the Wild when exhaustive surveys in known and/or expected habitat, at appropriate times (diurnal, seasonal, annual), throughout its historic range have failed to record an individual. Surveys should be over a time frame appropriate to the species' life history.

EXTINCT (EX) - A species is Extinct when there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died. A species is presumed Extinct when exhaustive surveys in known and/or expected habitat, at appropriate times (diurnal, seasonal, annual), throughout its historic range have failed to record an individual. Surveys should be over a time frame appropriate to the species' life history.